

Australia's Military Contribution to the Middle East Area of Operations

Background

- 2.1 The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has deployed forces to the Middle East almost continually since the 1991 Gulf War. For the majority of this period the forces deployed were part of the naval blockade enforcing UN sanctions on Iraq. Following the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 Australia has deployed maritime, land and air forces across the Middle East, most notably to the Arabian Gulf, Iraq, United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan.
- 2.2 Australia's military contribution to the International Stabilisation and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is deployed under Operation SLIPPER. Australia's military contribution includes around 1,550 ADF personnel who are deployed within Afghanistan. 1,241 personnel are deployed in Uruzgan Province and around 300 in Kabul, Kandahar and elsewhere in Afghanistan. These numbers vary depending on operational requirements and shifting seasonal conditions. 830 personnel provide support from locations within the broader Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO), including our maritime commitment.
- 2.3 In keeping with the ISAF strategy to strengthen civilian engagement in Afghanistan and to better integrate civilian and military efforts, in April 2010 the Australian Government announced a 50 per cent increase in Australia's civilian contribution to Afghanistan. Australia now has around 50 civilians working in Afghanistan, in addition to around ten Defence civilians.

- 2.4 Australia's substantial military, civilian and development assistance focuses on:
- training and mentoring the Afghan National Army (ANA) 4th Brigade in Uruzgan province to assume responsibility for the province's security;
 - building the capacity of the ANP to assist with civil policing functions in Uruzgan;
 - helping improve the Afghan Government's capacity to deliver core services and generate income-earning opportunities for its people; and
 - operations to disrupt insurgent operations and supply routes utilising the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG).

History of Australia's Military Commitment to Afghanistan

- 2.5 Following the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, Australia announced an ADF contribution to coalition operations against terrorism and a Special Forces Task Force was deployed to Afghanistan. The initial deployment of the Task Force finished in December 2002. There were no Australian units deployed to Afghanistan from December 2002 to September 2005. The Task Force was redeployed to Afghanistan for a single twelve month period in September 2005 in support of international efforts to target key insurgents.
- 2.6 In March 2006, Australia deployed two Chinook Helicopters to support the Task Force. In April 2007, the Chinooks were withdrawn for upgrades. The Rotary Wing Group returned to Afghanistan in February 2008, and has continued with seasonal eight month rotations since.
- 2.7 In August 2006, the first of four Reconstruction Task Forces deployed to Uruzgan Province, comprising both security and reconstruction personnel. It worked on community-based projects as part of the Netherlands-led Task-Force Uruzgan. In April 2007, the SOTG was redeployed to Afghanistan to enhance security in Uruzgan Province by disrupting Taliban command and control and supply routes.
- 2.8 From August 2007 to July 2009, the Australian Control and Reporting Centre deployed to Kandahar Airfield to assist in managing Afghanistan's airspace.

- 2.9 In October 2008, the first of two Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Forces (Australian Task Forces 5 and 6) replaced the Reconstruction Task Force. The deployment reflected Australia's new role in providing mentoring support to the 2nd Infantry Kandak of the ANA's 4th Brigade in Uruzgan. In May 2009, the size of this deployment was increased, with additional mentoring, security and engineering elements. In July 2009, a 120 person Election Support Force was deployed to provide security in Uruzgan during the Afghan Presidential Elections.
- 2.10 In February 2010, the Mentoring Task Force replaced the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force. The Mentoring Task Force included additional Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, and has gradually assumed responsibility for all six kandaks and the Headquarters of the ANA's 4th Brigade in Uruzgan.¹

Figure 2.1: Senator Furner at lunch with members of Australian units based at Al Minhad Air Base



Current Military Commitment in Support of Operations in Afghanistan

Combined Team – Uruzgan

- 2.11 Consistent with Australia's mission in Afghanistan, efforts are focused on training the Afghan National Security Forces to assume responsibility for security in the southern province of Uruzgan, and supporting

¹ Australian Department of Defence, *History of Australia's Military Commitment to Afghanistan, Fact Sheet 4*.

improvements in development and governance in the province. In Uruzgan, Australia works in partnership with the United States, New Zealand, Singapore, and Slovakia as the ISAF's Combined Team – Uruzgan (CT-U), which commenced on 1 August 2010 following the Dutch withdrawal.

- 2.12 Australia contributes 861 ADF personnel, 21 Australian Federal Police (AFP) personnel and nine civilian personnel to CT-U. There are also a small number of Defence civilians in support. The following paragraphs describe Australia's contribution to CT-U.
- 2.13 **Headquarters CT-U:** Australia provides 70 staff to the CT-U HQ, including the Deputy Commander. CT-U provides command over all ISAF forces in Uruzgan Province.
- 2.14 **Mentoring Task Force:** Australia provides a force of 724 personnel providing six military *Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams* who live with, train, mentor and provide support to their ANA 4th Brigade colleagues.
- 2.15 **Provincial Reconstruction Team:** Australia provides a Senior Civilian Representative, who leads the Uruzgan Provincial PRT, which includes 30 Australian Civilian staff and 67 ADF staff. It is responsible for coordinating all ISAF civilian activities in the province. The ADF contribution to the Uruzgan PRT consists of a dedicated Force Protection Element as well as personnel for the Trade Training School and the Australian Defence Force Managed Works Team.
- 2.16 **Australian enabling support in Uruzgan:** A range of enabling capabilities are dedicated to Uruzgan to assist in planning and executing operations. These include tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, electronic warfare support, counter Improvised Explosive Device technology, intelligence support, and medium artillery and mortar support. Coalition forces (largely the US) also provide logistics and engineering support in Uruzgan, along with a Medical facility. These capabilities are coordinated by HQ CT-U and are available to Australian personnel when required. Australia also contributes a number of enabling capabilities to support the ISAF units and Afghan Security Forces operating in Uruzgan as follows:
- 2.17 **Garrison Support:** 17 ADF personnel provide Force Protection support for Multinational Base-Tarin Kowt.
- 2.18 **Scan Eagle Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Detachment:** 17 ADF personnel operate the SCAN EAGLE UAV, which provides an overland surveillance capability to Australian forces in Uruzgan.

2.19 Engineer Support Element: 28 ADF personnel manage accommodation and infrastructure requirements for Australian personnel in Tarin Kot.

Figure 2.2: Senator Furner and Dr Jensen MP at PB Musaza'i, Mirabad Valley, Uruzgan



Special Operations Task Group

2.20 While not part of CT-U, the ADF's SOTG contributes significantly to security in Uruzgan Province by targeting the insurgent network in and around the province. These activities reduce the threat to ISAF and Afghan Security Forces, helping them extend the reach of essential government services into those areas. It consists of 318 ADF personnel primarily drawn from the Special Air Service Regiment and the 2nd Commando Regiment, and enabling and support areas. The SOTG is partnered with the Provincial Response Company of the ANP.

Australia's Wider Contribution in and to Afghanistan

2.21 Australia's efforts are focused on a whole-of-government effort in Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan, but are complemented by activities in Kandahar, Kabul and supported from the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere in the Middle East. ADF personnel and Australian officials in Kandahar support Regional Command (South), which has a key role in directing ISAF activities across southern Afghanistan. Australia also has ADF and civilian personnel deployed in Kabul, the hub of policy and decision-making for all provinces. The United Arab Emirates hosts the Australian headquarters that provides ADF oversight of, and theatre

support, to Operation SLIPPER. Details of the ADF commitment beyond Uruzgan are described below.

Kandahar

- 2.22 **Rotary Wing Group (RWG):** The ADF provides 64 personnel, located in Kandahar, to operate two CH-47D Chinook Helicopters in support of ISAF operations for eight months of each year. The RWG returned to Afghanistan in March.

Figure 2.3: Senator Furner in the Heron UAV Hangar, Kandahar Airfield, with Commanding Officer Heron Detachment, Wing Commander McMullan



- 2.23 **Air Component - Heron Detachment:** The ADF provides 41 personnel, located at Kandahar and in Uruzgan province, who operate Heron UAVs in support of Australian and other ISAF forces in RC(S).

Kabul

- 2.24 **Headquarters Joint Task Force 633 – Afghanistan:** Located in the Afghan capital city Kabul, the headquarters comprises around 50 personnel who provide national command of ADF elements deployed within Afghanistan, and coordinate the ADF's efforts with the ISAF Headquarters.
- 2.25 **Embedded Staff within Coalition Headquarters and ANA Training Institutions:** The ADF provides 151 personnel embedded across a number of Coalition headquarters throughout the MEAO, overwhelmingly in Kabul and Kandahar, providing critical specialist staff in support of operations. This number also includes ADF members embedded as trainers and Advisers within ANA Training Institutions such as the Afghan Artillery School.

United Arab Emirates

- 2.26 **Headquarters Joint Task Force 633:** Located in the UAE, the headquarters comprises 92 personnel and provides national oversight for Operation SLIPPER (Australia's military deployment to Afghanistan and the Middle East).
- 2.27 **Air Component.** The Air Component is made up of 287 ADF personnel providing the following capabilities:
- Air Component HQ;
 - 2 x AP-3C Orion;
 - 3 x C-130J; and
 - C-17.

Deployed throughout the Theatre

- 2.28 The ADF has a number of units which are deployed both within Afghanistan and UAE to support ADF operations throughout the Middle East. These units are outlined in the following paragraphs.
- 2.29 **Force Communications Unit:** The ADF provides 119 personnel across the MEAO to provide communications between all ADF elements of Coalition forces in Afghanistan and links back to Australia.
- 2.30 **Force Support Unit:** Based across the MEAO, 141 personnel provide logistic support to deployed ADF elements.
- 2.31 **Liaison Officers:** The ADF provides approximately 6 liaison officers to various Headquarters and organisations around the Middle East to support ADF operations. These liaison officers are separate to our embedded personnel in North Atlantic Treaty Organization and ISAF (Afghanistan) Headquarters.

Maritime Forces

- 2.32 The RAN continues to rotate a major fleet unit on operations to support coalition operations in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, the Indian Ocean and the Somali Basin. At the time of the Delegation's visit HMAS Stuart was tasked to the JTF 633. These ships are tasked with protecting shipping, anti-smuggling operations and counter piracy operations. The RAN also provides staff officers to the Coalition Maritime HQ in Bahrain and rotates through command of this HQ.

